

THE NEW ROUTE

TO

AUSTRALIA.

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THE NEW ROUTE TO AUSTRALIA.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

At a time when the subjects of Empire and of Imperial federation are so prominently before the public mind, the establishment of the "missing link" between Canada and Australia, and the consequent opening up of a new route, *via* Canada, between the mother country and her colonies at the antipodes, must be regarded as a matter of very considerable interest, and one that must lead to developments of great importance in the future. The scheme is distinctly a development of Australian enterprise, the prime movers in it being the New Zealand and Australian Steamship Company, formed last year, and its general managers, Messrs. Huddart, Parker, and Co, an old-established Australian shipping firm, with the head-quarters at Sydney. The primary object in view, as already briefly indicated in *The Times*, is to establish a regular service of steamers between Australian ports and Vancouver. In other words, it will do for Australia what the Canadian Pacific Railway has already so successfully done for Japan and China, by offering an alternative route, which would not only be invaluable in case of war—inasmuch as troops, travellers, or goods would practically never leave British territory—but would also be inviting at all times to those who are not favourably inclined towards the heat of the Red Sea. It cannot be doubted that the opportunity to exchange both that heat and the monotony of a prolonged sea voyage, *via* the Suez Canal, for a comfortable railway journey across Canada, with all its magnifi-

cent scenery, and the opportunity to break one's journey at any point one pleases, will be eagerly embraced by a large number of travellers, and the prospects of the new venture, as regards passengers at least, seem already to be well assured, even though, at present, there is no suggestion of competing with other routes in the matter of a saving of time. The Canadian Pacific Railway Company have naturally entered into the project with great heartiness, foreseeing, as they do, the possibilities of a great increase in the traffic along their lines. The question of goods traffic is at the present moment more uncertain; but it is remembered that when the Pacific boats from Canada to Yokohama began to run everything then was equally uncertain in regard to freight, while now they get almost as much as they can carry. Certain it is that the Canadians believe they will be able to develop an important trade with the Australian colonies by means of this direct service, and the Australians entertain similar hopes as regards Canada. Hitherto what trade they have done has been carried on mainly *via* San Francisco, but this has been of small account. The direct service, however, will bring about a complete revolution in the relationship of the sister colonies, and already the Canadian Government are disseminating information as to the class of goods which would be most likely to find a market in Australia. It is believed that in the matter of Canadian exports there would more especially be an opening in Australia for agricultural implements, machinery, and soft timber. It is believed, also, that Australia will be able to open up a much better market with Canada in regard to wool, and might, too, send there large supplies of fruit and more especially of meat. On this point Mr. D. E. Brown, who has been commissioned by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company to make a tour of inquiry through the Australian colonies and establish agencies at Auckland, Melbourne, Sydney, Adelaide, and

Brisbane, recently said to a representative of the *Melbourne Argus* :—

British Columbia, where I have lived for the past six years, raises no sheep, and not within 50 per cent. of the beef required for its own consumption. The mutton consumed is almost exclusively brought in from the States of Washington and Oregon, immediately south of us. The consumer has to pay 8d. and 9d. per pound for mutton decidedly inferior to yours. There is no reason why Australian and New Zealand mutton, which I understand can be produced here for 1½d. a pound in large quantities, could not be laid down there, with freight, insurance, and all other charges paid, at about 4d. per pound, and used to the total exclusion of the inferior article from the United States. Whilst the interchange of our products might not at first be very large, it would not take long, with the conditions of the two countries as they are, to work up a large trade which would prove of great mutual benefit.

Apart from these material considerations there is the probability that the new service would be the means of establishing a much closer bond between Australia and Canada than has ever existed before, and would afford a much greater prospect of a real federation than could be expected to result from appeals or arguments based on the claims of kinship alone. Hitherto direct relations between these two parts of the Empire have been practically non-existent, as they have been very little in touch with one another, if at all ; but the consequences, from an Imperial point of view, of the link now about to be established between them can hardly fail to confer invaluable benefits on all concerned.

To come down to details, it may be added that the two steamers, the Miowera and the Warimoo, with which the monthly service is to be conducted—to begin with, at least—were built towards the end of last year by Messrs. C. S. Swan and Hunter at Newcastle-on-Tyne, and claim to be the fastest colonial steamships at present in Australian waters. They developed 16½ knots on their trial, and are to average 14 knots across the Pacific. The duration of a

journey to Sydney by the new route will be—from Liverpool to New York and Montreal, six days (or one could, of course, travel direct to Montreal); from Montreal to Vancouver, $6\frac{1}{2}$ days; Vancouver to Sydney (calling at the Sandwich Islands and Brisbane), 21 days; or a total of $33\frac{1}{2}$ days. From Sydney the traveller could tranship to any of the Australian ports. Facilities of every kind are to be offered to tourists who will be able to make the tour of the world by way of Australia instead of China and Japan, as at present—an alternative which, it is believed, many of them would gladly embrace. The Canadian Government have given practical encouragement to the scheme by promising a subsidy of £25,000 a year, and it has been hoped that the various Australian Governments would, between them, give another £20,000; but this point, in view of the present condition of Australian finances, is somewhat doubtful. The High Commissioner for Canada, Sir Charles Tupper, who is taking an active share in the promotion of the whole scheme, has, however, applied, through the Colonial Office, that the steamers shall be put on the Admiralty list as available for the purposes of war cruisers whenever required by her Majesty's Government, and so become qualified for the usual Imperial subvention. The plans having been submitted to the Admiralty, and one of the vessels inspected by the Director of Naval Construction, it is not thought probable that the Admiralty will raise any objection, more especially as the advantages, from the point of view of national and Imperial defence, of our having on the Pacific a larger number than at present of swift steamers available for war purposes at almost a moment's notice are self-evident. The vessels on the Vancouver and Japan route are subsidized to the extent of £60,000 a year, of which sum the Imperial Government pays three-fourths, and the Canadian Government one-fourth; but the reasons adduced in favour of this subvention apply, if possible, with even

greater force in favour of similar support being given to the new route to Australia. There is, indeed, reason to hope that the matter will be favourably considered ; but, even if Sir Charles Tupper's request were refused, the promoters of the scheme are so much in earnest that they are firmly resolved to persevere with it in any case. It is further hoped that, in course of time, a regular mail service will be established by the new route. It is already regarded as certain that mails from Australia, at least, will be sent via Canada. But, whatever the future may bring forth, the scheme has already so far advanced that the new service is to commence on May 18, while private advices from Sydney state that the promoters already feel fully assured of the success that lies before them.

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